

ARTICLE GAUGE AND PROPORTIONAL SHIFTER SYSTEM

Abstract Of The Disclosure

A system for continuously packaging or sorting fragile articles having varying thicknesses in a stack includes a plurality of proportional shifters coupled to each of a plurality of stripping devices in an article infeed assembly. Each proportional shifter has an article gauge for measuring the height of a stack having a set or desired number of fragile articles, such as crackers or cookies. An article stripping device may be quickly and accurately adjusted in-process to measure the thickness of a set number of stacked articles contained in a given batch coming from an article infeed. The article gauge provides a measure of the height of a stack of a set number of articles sampled from an article infeed. The stack height is equivalent to the height of the stack of articles stripped by the strip feeder. Once an adjustment has been made for the correct thickness, the system allows a step for switching in-process the number of articles stripped between two different pre-determined numbers of articles in a stack, for example three and four, while maintaining the thickness adjustment. The system and method of the present invention prevent breakage and waste in packaging or sorting fragile articles having thicknesses which vary over time in a stack.